

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MC-02 AID-05

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O R 271420Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3693

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR MASS UG KE UR

SUBJECT: KAMPALA BOUND SOVIET ARMS CONVOY HALTED NEAR NAIROBI
AS KENYA-UGANDA RELATIONS WORSEN

1. ON JUNE 26 KENYAN AUTHORITIES STOPPED A ROAD CONVOY OF HEAVY SOVIET EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING NUMBER OF TARPAULIN-SHROUDED TRACKED VEHICLES ABOARD FLAT-BED TRUCKS, WHICH WAS EN ROUTE TO UGANDA FROM MOMBASA. CONVOY WAS FORCED TO OVERNIGHT IN NAIROBI AND FIVE SOVIET MILITARY ESCORT-ING TRUCKS WERE PLACED ABOARD CIVILIAN FLIGHT TO KAMPALA. AT THE TIME THIS MESSAGE DRAFTED (1400 LOCAL) CONVOY STILL BEING DETAINED UNDER POLICE GUARD.

2. KENYAN ACTION OCCURRED IN AFTERMATH OF CLAIMS EARLIER THIS WEEK BY GENERAL AMIN THAT BRITISH FORCES IN KENYA
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ARE PREPARING TO LAUNCH ATTACK AGAINST UGANDA AND

THAT TWO TROOP-LADEN BRITISH WARSHIPS ARE IN MOMBASA. AT JUNE 26 SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VP MOI AND MIN DEF GICHURU DELIVERED SHARPLY-WORDED DENIALS OF AMIN'S ALLEGATIONS BRANDING THEM QTE NONSENSE AND PROVOCATIVE UNQTE. (COMMENT: ACCORDING SOURCES AT BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, THE ONLY BRITISH MILITARY IN KENYA AT PRESENT TIME ARE CONTINGENT OF THIRTY-EIGHT MILITARY ADVISORS, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE ENLISTED TECHNICIANS ATTACHED TO KENYAN AIR FORCE AND NAVY. TWO SHIPS REFERRED TO BY AMIN ARE IN MOMBASA ON ROUTINE PORT VISIT).

3. NEW THAT LIBYAN AIRCRAFT HAD ARRIVED IN UGANDA IN RESPONSE TO AMIN'S CALL FOR ASSISTANCE SPARKED HEATED PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE WITH SEVERAL MP'S CALLING FOR RAPID MODERNIZATION OF KENYAN MILITARY, ESPECIALLY THE AIR FORCE. DEBATE WAS CUT OFF JUNE 27 WHEN ATTORNEY GENERAL NJONJO ISSUED LOW KEY STATEMENT ASSURING KENYANS GOK PREPARED FOR COUNTRY'S DEFENSE.

4. CURRENT STRAIN IN KENYA-UGANDA RELATIONS HAS BEEN FRONT-PAGE NEWS WITH BOTH NAIROBI DAILIES CALLING FOR TOUGHER GOK STAND. DAILY NATION, WHICH OFTEN REJECTS OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT THINKING ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IN JUNE 27 EDITORIAL PORTRAYED UGANDA AS UNFRIENDLY STATE, PRAISED DECISION TO HALT CONVOY AND URGED GOK TO IMPOUND THIS ARMS SHIPMENT AND BAR FUTURE ARMS TRAFFIC THROUGH KENYA.

5. WE ARE TRYING TO GET BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON WEAPONS SEIZURE FROM KENYA DEFENSE MINISTRY, BUT PERM SEC KIEREINI HAS BEEN TIED UP IN MEETINGS THIS SUBJECT TODAY IN PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND HAS THEREFORE BEEN UNABLE TO SEE US.

6. COMMENT: WHILE GOK DECISION TO HALT CONVOY IS OBVIOUS REPRISAL FOR AMIN'S CHARGES THAT KENYA IS ASSISTING BRITAIN TO ATTACK UGANDA, TWO ADDITIONAL FACTORS MAY LIE BEHIND THIS ACTION. UGANDAN PRESS REPORTS AND RADIO BROADCASTS HAVE ADOPTED DECIDELY CRITICAL LINE IN RECENT REPORTING ON KENYAN DEVELOPMENTS, IN-

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CLUDING PERSONAL ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT KENYATTA. ON MILITARY LEVEL, KENYAN DEFENSE OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED BY OTHER 1975 DELIVERIES OF HEAVY SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO UGANDA WHERE ARMS BUILDUP HAS TAKEN PLACE AT SAME TIME GOK HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ON ITS ABILITY TO RESTRAIN THE INCREASINGLY ERRATIC AMIN. MARSHALL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN RELATIONS, INTERVENTION, ARMS SHIPMENTS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NAIROB05456
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750224-0210
From: NAIROBI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975069/aaaaaick.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2003 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KAMPALA BOUND SOVIET ARMS CONVOY HALTED NEAR NAIROBI AS KENYA-UGANDA RELATIONS WORSEN
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UG, KE, UR, UK, (AMIN, IDA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006